

VZCZCXRO9006  
OO RUEHCI  
DE RUEHKA #1139/01 3041133  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7644  
INFO RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 8688  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 2415  
RUEHJA/AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY 0265  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 9928  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0904  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 1526  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 DHAKA 001139

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/30/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [BG](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#)

SUBJECT: PLAN TO ASSIST THE BANGLADESH NAVY IMPROVE  
MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH THE CREATION OF A NAVAL SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS FORCE (NAVSOF)

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S//REL TO USA, FVEY/RELIDO) Action Request: Embassy Dhaka recommends USG support for the creation of a Bangladesh Navy Special Operations unit, similar to US SEAL and Special Boat units. The Government of Bangladesh intends this unit to be a counterterrorism force that will address critical gaps in Bangladesh's maritime counterterrorism capability. Transnational violent extremist organizations (such as Interagency Intelligence Committee on Terrorism (IICT) priority one Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) and IICT priority three Hizbul Mujahidin (HM)), transnational crime, drugs and human trafficking are currently exploiting these gaps to facilitate operations throughout South Asia. USG support for the creation of this new force is critical to denying space to terrorists. Additionally, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba is actively developing a maritime capability in order to infiltrate India; due to increases in land and air security within India, Bangladesh is a viable maritime launching point for these infiltration efforts.

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Bangladesh Navy requests US assistance to establishes NAVSOF  
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¶2. (SBU) On March 17, 2008, Major General Cambria, Commanding General, US Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC) visited Bangladesh and received a briefing on the Bangladesh Navy's concept for the creation of a Navy Special Operations Force (NAVSOF). MG Cambria offered to assist in the creation of such a force by sharing observations and lessons learned from the development of US Special Operations Forces. In support of a subsequent request from then Bangladesh Navy Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations Rear Admiral Mustafizur Rahman that SOCPAC assess the Bangladesh Navy's plan to create NAVSOF, a team from SOCPAC and Joint Interagency Task Force-West (JIATF-W) conducted a Subject Matter Expert Exchange (SMEE) with the Bangladesh Navy from 7 to 20 October 2008. The purpose of the SMEE was to exchange information about the creation of naval special operations forces and to assess the Bangladesh Navy's plan to create NAVSOF. This team visited various Bangladesh Navy commands, facilities and possible training areas in Khulna, Mongla, Chittagong, Kaptai, and Cox's Bazar. At each stop, the team interacted with navy commanders with a particular focus on the nature of the terrorist threat in their area of responsibility.

¶3. (SBU) The SMEE team noted that the Bangladesh Navy had established a provisional "Navy Special Warfare Diving and Salvage Command" and re-designated their Diving and Salvage School as "Navy Special Warfare, Diving and Salvage School." Stated wartime roles for this command include traditional SOF missions such as intelligence collection, reconnaissance, and

offensive operations; stated peacetime roles include performing decisive counterterrorism as required, hostage rescue, curbing piracy and smuggling, search and rescue, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The SMEE team concluded that the Bangladesh Navy should continue to develop NAVSOF with missions of national defense, improving maritime border security, addressing asymmetrical terrorist threats from non-state actors, enforcing Bangladesh's Exclusive Economic Zone, ensuring the security of critical economic infrastructure located in the maritime and coastal region, countering piracy and transnational crime, counterterrorism, conducting search and rescue, disaster relief, and protecting fisheries. Additionally, the team recognized the value and economy of consolidating navy salvage and diving capability within the command to maximize the use of common facilities and equipment.

¶4. (S//REL TO USA, FVEY/RELID) A critical question addressed by the SMEE was whether this capacity would be better placed in the Bangladesh Coast Guard. The SMEE concluded that the capacity should reside within the Navy, not the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is a small, rotational force that operates in a narrow area of operations along the coast, and lacks institutional capacity to generate and sustain the NAVSOF force. The new NAVSOF unit will have a CT mission as well, and the capability to go where the Rapid Action Battalion can't to pursue terrorists throughout the maritime, littoral and riverine environments. The Navy also has the institutional training capability to train the force and is sufficiently large to man the force with personnel who will remain in NAVSOF through their career. Most importantly, the Government of Bangladesh has also decided that this

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capability should reside in the Navy.

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Recommendations  
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¶5. (SBU) Major recommendations provided by the Embassy to the Bangladesh Government to achieve an initial operational capability (IOC) and end-state operating capability (EOC) of naval special operations are as follows.

- a. (SBU) Establish a "Pre-Commissioning Bangladesh Naval Special Warfare Diving and Salvage (SWDS) Command." This provisional unit should function under Commander, Chittagong until commissioning. Subsequently, the command should be autonomous, reporting to BN HQ and drawing support from nearby naval facilities.
- b. (SBU) Establish the SWDS command, to include provision of manpower and equipment for filling yearly targets to reach EOC. At IOC, the command would have 146 operators. At EOC, the command would have 584 operators.
- c. (SBU) Authorize SWDS pre-commissioning unit manning at the level required for IOC. Permanently filling the initial staff and cadre positions should be accomplished as soon as possible in order to begin doctrine development and instructor training by taking advantage of upcoming US training. Ideally, this would take place no later than 1 January 2009 in order to allow the US Embassy to complete vetting in a timely fashion for upcoming training.
- d. (SBU) All support and equipment provided as US assistance under this program, including defender class patrol craft procured with US counterterrorism funds would be best utilized by SWDSC in order to maximize their contribution and consolidate maintenance.
- e. (SBU) Develop a Navy Instruction (NI) that authorizes:
  - Development of NAVSOF specific doctrine and unit Standard Operating Procedures
  - Additional diet requirements for high physical demands
  - Commando incentive and danger pays
  - Distinctive commando insignia and combat uniform
  - Specific career progression of naval commando officers and men, to include establishment of commando rates for enlisted personnel and commando specialties for officers to provide the opportunity for commando personnel to achieve

high levels of proficiency

- Advanced officer and NCO education and training

f. (SBU) Navy commando qualified personnel should stay in the Navy special warfare community for their entire careers. Officers may need to rotate out for professional development and in order to be eligible for promotion, but should return to SWDSC.

g. (SBU) Immediately develop necessary facilities to train and base the force.

h. (SBU) Memorandum of agreement between the Bangladesh Navy and the Bangladesh Army for sufficient class seats for basic airborne training at the School of Infantry and Tactics for all commandos to become airborne qualified.

i. (SBU) Memorandum of agreement between Bangladesh Navy and Air Force to provide aircraft support to SWDSC to support training and operations.

¶6. (SBU) US Embassy Dhaka recommends the USG support the creation of this force, and has submitted several requests for materiel and training, to include three Flash Buffalo JCETS annually beginning in FY10, boats and equipment in separate NDAA 1206 proposals for FY08 and FY09, and other engagement events to develop doctrine and training. The US Embassy is interested in developing a memorandum of understanding with the Government of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Navy HQ to facilitate the planning and implementation of security force assistance to the SWDSC.

¶7. (C//REL TO USA, FVEY/RELID) Bangladesh Navy,s creation of this force is a vital step toward improving maritime security in Bangladesh, and is the most appropriate use of maritime related USG Counterterrorism assistance. As no other partner nation is planning to support Bangladesh in this effort, USG assistance is critical to ensure this initiative succeeds. Improving maritime security in the Northern Bay of Bengal has the potential to disrupt the transnational reach of violent extremist organizations, crime, drugs and human trafficking, and will contribute to regional security in South Asia by denying space for Violent Extremist Organizations to operate. NAVSOF would also provide the Bangladesh Navy a niche capability that could be provided as part of future multinational coalition naval missions, including maritime interdiction operations and peacekeeping

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operations.

Moriarty